

The background of the entire page is a photograph of several wooden blocks scattered on a wooden surface. The blocks are in various colors: yellow, orange, green, and blue. One green block is shaped like a bridge arch. The lighting is warm, creating soft shadows.

# Constructing Bridges

*A path of learning from birth to K-12 schools*



Child Care Coordinating Committee Report  
December 2002



# About the Child Care Coordinating Committee

The Washington State Legislature established the Child Care Coordinating Committee in 1988 to advise policymakers. The Committee reports annually to the Legislature, the Governor, and State agencies with strategies to improve the quality, availability, and affordability of programs for early learning and out-of-school time.

- The Committee consists of 33 members representing various roles, agencies, and programs in early learning and out-of-school time. Approximately one-third of the committee represents State agencies, and two-thirds represent community-based organizations and providers.
- Over the past 14 years, ten subcommittees have framed the concepts around various topics, including: Career Development, Public Policy, Licensing, Subsidies, Inclusive Child Care, Health and Safety, Partnership, School-Age Care, Systems, and Family Focus.
- The Division of Child Care and Early Learning, Department of Social and Health Services, provides staff support to the Child Care Coordinating Committee.
- The views expressed in this report are those solely of the Child Care Coordinating Committee.
- To contact committee members for further information, please call Elizabeth Bonbright Thompson, (Chair, Public Policy Subcommittee) at the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network at (253) 383-1735, ext. 15 or ebthompson@childcarenet.org.

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# Executive Summary

In this annual report, the Child Care Coordinating Committee examines how strong systems of early childhood education and out-of-school time programs can contribute significantly to the school readiness and school success required by state and national education goals - *if* learning settings other than schools and schools are effectively linked to and aligned with one another. The federal Educate America Act of 1994<sup>1</sup> promotes creating a bridge of educational opportunities from birth to adulthood. Washington State’s Basic Education Act includes academic knowledge, problem-solving skills, and work preparedness.<sup>2</sup>

The Child Care Coordinating Committee can be an active partner with the Administration, the Legislature, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to articulate the need for and benefits of strong linkages among early educators, out-of-school time programs, and K-12 schools in order to align early education and out-of-school time with K-12 national and state learning goals.

We offer specific recommendations within three avenues for action:

## Goal 1: Bolster support to parents and other early educators

### Action

Increase reimbursement rate for subsidized child care to at least the 75th to 80th percentile of the market rate.

Increase subsidy eligibility to families with incomes up to 225 percent of the federal poverty level.

Reduce the family’s co-payment for subsidized child care to no more than 10 percent of the family’s income.

Exempt mothers of infants from birth to 12 months of age from TANF work requirements.

### Reason

The reimbursement rate (currently at the 58th percentile based on the 2000 rate survey) limits parents’ options and provides inadequate funding to pay for educated caregivers with high quality environments.

Low-income working families need high quality child care to enable parents to work and to support children’s learning.

As co-payments increase, use of licensed child care decreases, putting children’s development and learning at risk.

Maternal stress inhibits a child’s learning and healthy growth, and maternal-child bonding is critical to the child’s ability to learn.

Provide funding and incentives to increase compensation for educators and caregivers

The average salary for child care teachers hovers at the poverty level, less than half what beginning Kindergarten teachers earn, which causes high turnover and low quality care.

Expand the True Cost of Care Project beyond Seattle/ King County to develop more comprehensive data on the gap in funding

Early education and out-of-school time programs do not accurately budget for salaries commensurate to the education required of teachers, educational materials, and nutritional meals. With an accurate budget, policy makers will have a better estimate of the funding gap.

Research innovative funding to share the burden of the cost of early childhood education.

Currently, parents pay about 80 percent of the total cost of child care (early care and education). Government pays most of the remainder; employers pay a small proportion. With shared financing, quality and access would improve.

Ensure that existing community-based support systems are retained at current levels of funding

Education and training, compensation initiatives, technical assistance, public health, food subsidies, licensing and accreditation all work together to boost the quality of early learning and out-of-school time programs. These programs also support parents as a child's first educator.

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## Goal 2: Build partnerships among educators and educational settings

### Action

Identify shared goals, resources, and objectives from the community based teams in Project Lift Off's "Getting School Ready," the Alignment Project, and other similar projects. Expand upon elements that succeeded in creating a common language; replicate and customize in additional communities.

### Reason

Lessons for replication can be drawn across the models currently in use by certain regions for Initiative-728 funds, Washington State Project STEPS, and the BOOST Learning Initiative, among others.

Create incentives for school districts to allocate funds for Kindergarten teachers to meet with early education teachers/providers and align learning objectives. Provide grant funds to create transition programs that include home visits, preschool visits, and collection of portfolios of children's pre-K work.

Effective strategies range from small-scale to large-scale. Children and families would benefit from small grant programs to create district transition plans.

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### Goal 3: Align learning outcomes

#### Action

Review and replicate elements of the Maryland Model for School Readiness, especially the Work Sampling System™ which documents and supports children's skills, knowledge, and behavior across seven developmental areas.<sup>3</sup>

Disseminate a pocket guide for parents/teachers that outlines how early learning and Kindergarten curriculum are aligned – similar to Common Understandings by Project Lift Off in King County.

Assess the feasibility of a universal Pre-K program through an expansion of ECEAP, blending of funding streams, and creation of new revenue sources similar to other states (ie: tobacco tax in California).

#### Reason

This developmentally appropriate method builds upon the strengths of early education programs, linking them to future learning.

Alignment helps to build partnerships that lead to student success, by creating a common language and understanding of the issue of school readiness and school success.

Universal Pre-K offers the assurance that EVERY child has the opportunity to succeed in future education and provides a convenient platform to establish communication among early learning programs and K-12 schools.





# Creating a Bridge Between Early Learning and School Success

Efforts to improve early learning will not work unless they involve States and school districts, which shoulder the primary responsibility for providing public education. . .<sup>4</sup>

President George W. Bush  
April 2002, introducing his early childhood initiative

President Bush's initiative capitalizes on a national priority of families, schools, business leaders, and elected officials - providing children with early learning opportunities that best prepare them for school. Washington State has been a national model in reaching this goal for more than a decade, with steady, innovative investments to improve the system of early learning combining federal, state funds, and private grants.<sup>5</sup> Not surprisingly, early education and out-of-school time have increasingly been promoted as the best investment to ensure that all children succeed in K-12 school<sup>6 7</sup>

Washington State has a long way to go before we can claim (1) that every child has the early education necessary for school success or (2) that his/her early learning is adequately linked to the K-12 classroom - despite our gains in the quality and access of early learning and out-of-school time programs. Currently, parents bear sole responsibility for creating the link between early learning and out-of-school programs and K-12 schools. Yet they often lack adequate information about typical child development and guidelines for K-12 education. While States, through their local school districts, are held directly responsible for children's learning, they are not maximizing significant potential gains from improving the quality of a child's education prior to Kindergarten and during the student's time out-of-school.

In achieving the goals of the state's Basic Education Act which include knowledge, problem-solving skills, and work preparedness,<sup>8</sup> the Child Care Coordinating Committee can be an active partner to the Administration, the Legislature, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to articulate the need for and benefits of strong linkages among early educators, out-of-school time programs, and K-12 schools in order to align early education and out-of-school time with K-12 learning.

In this annual report, the CCCC examines the issue of School Readiness and School Success with the goal of building a bridge of educational opportunities from birth to adulthood.

*Since States and districts are directly responsible for student learning and achievement while they are in school, preparing children to learn before they start school is in their best interest.*

President  
George W. Bush

# What School Readiness Means

What do we mean when we refer to School Readiness or School Success? Increasingly, educators and policy makers at the national, state, and local levels agree that a child's readiness for school depends upon his/her experiences outside of the K-12 school day. These experiences include the learning that takes place in the child's family, early care and education, and the youth's time out-of-school.

Eight educational goals, including the goal that all children begin school "ready to learn" by the Year 2000, have been established at the national level by the National Education Goals Panel.<sup>9</sup> The panel outlined three components of school readiness:

## Components of School Readiness and Their Dimensions

### Child's Readiness

- His/her physical health and small/large motor development
- Social and emotional development
- Approaches to learning
- Language development
- Cognitive skills and learning

### School's readiness for children

- Smooth transition between home and school
- Continuity between early childhood education programs and elementary schools
- Helping children understand a complex world
- Commitment to the success of every child
- Commitment to the success of every teacher and adult who works with the child during the day
- Approaches that enhance a child's achievement
- Learning from and improving upon school performance
- Serving children in the community
- Responsibility for results
- Strong leadership

### Support in family and community that contributes to the child's readiness

- Universal access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate early care and education
- Supporting parents as a child's first teacher
- Nutrition and physical care for all children

Similar concepts and elements are used within Washington State. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) promotes the dual mission of Ready Schools and Ready Children. The OSPI outlines the specifics elements that contribute to school success, which are parallel to those identified by the National Goals Panel.<sup>10</sup> The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, a State program created to improve school readiness among low-income preschool children, promotes the same definition as the National Goal Panel with comprehensive services and performance standards across seven competency areas.

### Almost half of entering Kindergarten students have moderate to serious problems in their transition.

However, national research on Kindergarten transitions indicates that almost half of entering Kindergarten students have moderate to serious problems in their transition,<sup>11</sup> which is consistent with estimates from school districts in Washington State.<sup>12</sup>

"Kindergarten teachers have reported that the single greatest challenge they face is that a majority of the children lack some or all of the needed social and emotional competencies needed to learn," states a recent report from the Kauffman Foundation. "Young children who do not have the opportunities to engage in stimulating cognitive activities and nurturing social-emotional relationships are already behind their peers when they enter Kindergarten." States report that between 20 and 49 percent of all Kindergarteners begin school with delayed social-emotional development. Ensuring children's success depends upon high quality early learning, health and mental health services, and early intervention.<sup>13</sup>

Bipartisan consensus has emerged at the national level on the definition of a child's readiness, a school's readiness, and the community support needed for school success. However, the State of Washington has just begun to build the spans of the bridge between learning outside of schools and within K-12 education.

*Before children can learn to read, they must learn basic social and emotional school skills—such as the ability to tolerate frustration without melting down or acting aggressively, and the ability to be attentive and follow directions.*

*Set for Success  
Ewing Marion  
Kauffman Foundation*



*Washington State needs a stronger infrastructure to support bridges between learning environments that propel school success and the K-12 system.*

## Three Bridge-Building Strategies

Like the blocks of concrete used to support the spans of a bridge, the support system for all educational programs is an interrelated structure. This infrastructure includes research on best practice with technical assistance, teacher training and education, high quality educational settings, and professional referrals. In the perfect world, the infrastructure would carry each child from one supportive educational environment to the next with the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills needed for the next level. In addition, the infrastructure would ensure that each educational setting would be buoyed up by resources from governmental and community-based agencies adequate to provide high-quality educational experiences to each child from birth to adulthood. In Washington State, this infrastructure needs strengthening.

How can we boost the existing foundation to early education, out-of-school time, and K-12 schools AND support the child's transitions among educational environments to ensure that every child has the chance to succeed? Expanding upon themes from national and state initiatives, the Child Care Coordinating Committee recommends three avenues of action:

- 1) Bolster support to parents and other early educators;
- 2) Build partnerships among parents, early care and education, K-12 schools, and out-of-school time programs to effectively reinforce developmentally appropriate learning at all stages; and
- 3) Align activities and outcomes in early education, K-12 schools, and programs during out-of-school time to support the full range of a child's development and achieve state learning goals.

### 1. Bolster Support to Parents and Other Early Educators

Our current structure of early education has been described as a “non-system” that lacks an overarching plan or blueprint for improvement.<sup>14</sup> Incrementally, small pieces to the system have been added as pilot programs with short-term funding that generally reaches only a few parents, teachers, and other caregivers like grandparents, friends, and neighbors. As a result, the “system” addresses many elements to improve the quality of care, but only in small pieces. Without a blueprint with the end goal of universal access to high quality care, the system will continue to be fragmented. The State of Washington needs greater assurances of the universal quality of early education and out-of-school time to maximize student's success in K-12 education.

Instead, efforts to build universal quality took a step backwards when Washington State child care programs and services received budget cuts of \$22.3 million in State Fiscal Year 2002. These cuts represented 41 percent of the total budget reduction to the WorkFirst program. These budget reductions impair low-income parents' ability to retain their jobs, reduce learning opportunities for low-income children, and increase the number of children who enter school at a disadvantage.

To prepare children for school and schools for children, the infrastructure for early learning and out-of-school care needs to be restored and enhanced. Specifically, we recommend that the Legislature and Administration:

- Support low-income parents by raising the subsidy reimbursement rate, increasing eligibility limits, reducing the amount of the co-payment, and allowing TANF parents to care for their infants full-time
- Restore and enhance (1) continuing education and training programs for teachers and providers, (2) teacher career track and compensation programs, and (3) innovative financing initiatives, among other existing elements of the infrastructure.

## 2. Build Partnerships among Parents, Learning Settings Outside School, and K-12 Schools

In addition to bolstering support to parents, Washington State needs to build upon local initiatives that solidify connections among early educators, out-of-school time programs, and K-12 schools. To make progress in students' skill levels, K-12 learning urgently needs formal ties to early education and out-of-school time programs. Parents and educators need to develop a common understanding of developmentally appropriate outcomes at each stage. Currently, a few efforts exist, primarily supported with federal funds or private grants. However, no long-term support exists to establish and institutionalize these relationships and provide parents with support in helping their children navigate the transition to Kindergarten. With each year of unsuccessful transitions, elementary school students fall further behind.

Several promising initiatives in Washington State could be built into broader approaches. We describe them below, grouped into partnerships between early learning and K-12 and partnerships between K-12 and out-of-school time programs.





## Models to Establish Partnerships

### Between K-12 Schools and Early Learning Programs

Office of the Superintendent of  
Public Instruction (OSPI):  
Supporting Districts in Partner-  
ships with Early Learning

The OSPI Early Learning Task Force aims to: (1) increase public awareness of the importance of early learning, (2) disseminate research on elements of quality early education, (3) coordinate policies, procedures, and outcomes among early learning programs, and (4) support funding partnerships. To accomplish this mission, the Early Learning Task Force is developing a 5-year strategic plan to support districts as they partner with early learning programs to meet state learning goals.

I-728: Boosting early assistance  
and extended learning

Initiative-728, passed by the voters with a 72 percent approval rate in 2000, allows school districts to allocate funds to improve the quality of public education and create higher standards through reduced class size and other methods, including early assistance to students who need support prior to kindergarten and extended learning opportunities (either full-day Kindergarten or out-of-school time programs).

Based on preliminary survey data, about 16 percent of the funds have been expended on extended learning opportunities (including full-day Kindergarten) and 4 percent on expanded early learning for students at risk. School districts could use an additional portion of I-728 funds to (a) institutionalize effective transitions from early care settings to Kindergarten and (b) support K-12 students' academic and social skills through high quality out-of-school time programs.<sup>15</sup>



STEPS: Team work from pre-K to K

Washington State Project STEPS (Sequenced Transition to Education in the Public Schools) is part of a national initiative to develop collaborative statewide policies and train community teams of school districts, special education programs, child care providers, Head Start programs, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, Bilingual/ Migrant programs, Title I programs (the federal educational grant program for low-income school districts), and families. The training, which is based on the national model developed by the University of Kentucky, builds team skills. In addition, the program develops a common language about the skills children develop in Pre-K settings and the skills that schools expect the children to have in Kindergarten.

Since 1997, several communities in the State of Washington have completed training and are ready to pursue the issue of readiness in a community-wide approach.<sup>16</sup>

The project has been a statewide interagency collaboration between Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Health, Department of Social and Health Services, Head Start, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, the Vancouver Educational Service District, the Migrant Council, the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network, and parents.

Getting School Ready:  
Improving readiness of  
children and schools

Project Lift Off in King County sponsors a “Getting School Ready Project,” bringing together school districts, libraries, early care and education providers, parents, resource and referral organizations, and higher education to improve the readiness of children and of schools. The Project has trained

**The “Getting School Ready Project” has trained parents to convene and facilitate community conversations on school readiness issues.**

parents to convene and facilitate community conversations on school readiness issues among parents, early childhood and Kindergarten teachers.

Each community conversation included 5-15 persons, and Project Lift Off compiled the results from a total of 35 groups. Data from these conversations will inform the development of “Common Understandings,” resources for parents, and a tool kit for conducting community conversations.<sup>17</sup>



## Between K-12 Schools and Out-of-school Time Programs

**BOOST: how out-of-school programs support student success**



The BOOST (Better Outcomes for Out-of-school Time) Learning Initiative is a three-year initiative funded by the Stuart Foundation under the leadership of School's Out Washington in collaboration with the Seattle Public Schools. The BOOST Learning Initiative identifies the ways that out-of-school time programs support a student's success in the classroom. The project just completed its community outreach and needs assessment in the targeted regions of Burien, SeaTac, White Center, and South Seattle.

In the next phase of the project, a Seattle Public Schools coordinator will help identify resources and training that the schools could offer to out-of-school time providers. In addition, School's Out Washington will aid providers to enhance their services and connect to the learning goals in the classroom.<sup>18</sup>

**School Linkages:  
Out-of-school programs  
supporting student learning  
and outcomes**

The Seattle MOST (Making the Most of Out-of-school Time) has completed the School Linkages Project, which was funded by the Wallace Reader's Digest Fund. The School Linkages Project selected six teams comprised of school representatives and out-of-school time providers to assess the needs of their community and to develop a plan of cooperative services to address those needs.

The emerging partnerships were then able to launch into the Alignment Initiative, a new initiative introduced by the Seattle Public Schools that offers in-kind contributions to out-of-school time programs in exchange for supporting of student's learning outcomes. This project, while too recent for a full evaluation, bears promise for replication in other communities.<sup>19</sup>

**21st Century Learning Centers:  
Partnerships between  
Community Based Organizations and Schools to Improve  
Out-of-School-Time**

The 21st Century Learning Grant Program is a federal initiative, which is now administered through a block grant by state agencies like the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The OSPI selects proposals from local collaborations of schools, local governments, and community-based organizations including faith-based organizations to improve the quality of out-of-school-time programs and promote school success. With the new block grant approach based on the Title 1 formula, total grants to Washington State have been reduced from about \$42 million to \$4.1 million with the emphasis on collaborative partnerships.

### 3. Align Learning Outcomes

From birth, children learn from adults and their environment. Although the social, emotional, and cognitive skills they develop in early education settings are critical to their future educational success, early educators and elementary teachers do not commonly know what learning takes place in each setting. The learning outcomes from early education, K-12 schools, and out-of-school-time programs need to build upon and align with each other for students to experience smooth transitions among schools and continued educational success.

In Washington and around the country, models for aligning learning outcomes are underway. Several examples are highlighted below. The strategies focus either on linking early education to K-12 schools OR on creating complementary outcomes between K-12 classrooms and out-of-school-time programs. In linking early education with K-12, several states have introduced universal Pre-Kindergarten programs to ensure that children have opportunities for early education and to provide stronger linkages to school academic learning requirements.

*From birth,  
children learn  
from adults and  
their environments.*

#### Models to Align Learning Between Pre-K and K-12 and Between K-12 and Out-of-school Time

##### Align Early Learning with K-12 skills

###### Teacher Certification Pre-K through 3rd Grade

*Washington State*

The Washington State Board of Education established a Pre-K to 3rd Grade teacher endorsement for teacher certification in 1999. The required teacher competencies are in alignment with current research regarding learning and teaching practices for young children birth to eight years.

###### Aligning Early Literacy Frameworks with the Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements

*Washington State*

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) convened an Early Literacy Task Force to develop Birth to Five Frameworks for Reading, Writing, and Communication that are in alignment with the K-12 Essential Academic Learning Requirements and the grade level frameworks. The Early Literacy Task Force was comprised of a broad base of early learning stakeholders, consultants from early care and education, and K-12. This product was published in June 2000 and is currently disseminated across the state upon request through the OSPI publications department. The Birth to Five Frameworks for math has been initiated.





**Aligning ECEAP goals with state  
K-12 learning requirements**

*Washington State*

With a grant from the Washington State Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), the Puget Sound Educational Service District created an outline that demonstrates the continuity between the developmental goals and strategies that most children develop in ECEAP/Head Start and the State determined Essential Academic Learning Requirements for K-12. With this instrument, Head Start and ECEAP teachers and parents can understand how their children have been prepared for school, and Kindergarten teachers can be prepared for the students entering their classes.<sup>20</sup>

**Aligning ECEAP goals with state  
K-12 learning requirements**

*Washington State*

The East Valley School District, under contract with Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), works with schools in Spokane to align ECEAP goals and benchmarks with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements.

**Increase focus on early  
learning to ensure success  
in elementary school**

*Illinois*

The Illinois State Board of Education includes improving the quality of early learning as one of four goals to ensure academic success by the end of third grade. The Board reconvened its Early Childhood Advisory Committee to recommend initiatives to promote school success, and it contracted for an expanded website of resources for parents and early educators.<sup>21</sup>

**Linking early education  
and school staff**

*Maryland*

The Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) links early education programs and local school systems to help parents, teachers, and providers support children's learning from pre-school through elementary school. Teachers assess children's learning by collecting systematic portfolios of their work, communicating children's learning to parents and Kindergarten teachers, and using the assessments to modify classroom curriculum to be developmentally appropriate.<sup>22</sup>





## Expanding High-quality Preschool/Universal Pre-K

### All day Pre-K

*Washington D.C.*

In Washington D.C., all-day PreKindergarten classes are offered in every elementary school.<sup>23</sup>

### Planning Pre-K for 4-year-olds

*New York*

New York State Universal PreKindergarten Program plans to offer PreKindergarten to all 4-year-olds. Local communities select criteria to enroll age-eligible children. Up to 275,000 children in New York could participate when the program is fully implemented, a marked increase from the 18,280 served in the first year.<sup>24 25</sup>

### Expanding preschool through various routes

*Ohio*

In Ohio, districts expand preschool programs for eligible 3- and 4-year-olds through contracts with Head Start, chartered schools, or licensed child care to provide Ohio Public School Preschool.<sup>26</sup>

### Goals for school success from preschool through higher education

*California*

The Master Plan for Education, which has recently been drafted into legislation, charts goals for school success from preschool through higher education. As part of the Master Plan, the legislation proposes statewide availability of two years of universal preschool and full-day Kindergarten.<sup>27</sup>



## Aligning Learning in Out-of-school Programs to Complement K-12 Classroom Skills

### Tying skill standards for child care to learning requirements

*Washington State*

The Washington State Skill Standards project has produced scales of competency in all the skills required for several staff positions in the early learning and out-of-school time system: Lead Early Childhood Teacher, Family Child Care Provider, Infant/Toddler Specialist, and School-Age Care Professional. While the latter currently outlines the general competency areas, the project is now creating staff skill standards that tie to the students' Essential Academic Learning Requirements by 2003. By complementing K-12 curriculum with activities during a student's time out-of-school, programs partner their resources to support the child's comprehensive growth and learning.



*The National Goals panel recommends that Kindergarten teachers establish a relationship with each child and family prior to the first day of school through visits to the home and pre-school, personal letters, and an open house before school begins.*

### Enhancing classroom learning through out-of-school time programs

*Washington State*

The Seattle Public Schools Alignment Initiative offers a second approach to link the work of out-of-school time programs as an enhancement and support to classroom learning through activities that complement, not duplicate K-12 assignments. This project consists of 62 community-based teams comprised of out-of-school time programs, schools, and other partners. As the program continues, the lessons learned should be disseminated to other similar local efforts.

## Other Resources

### Indicators of child outcomes for infants to fourth graders

*Rhode Island and 15 other states*

Rhode Island KIDS Count is leading an initiative of 16 States to create a set of indicators of child outcomes for children from infants to fourth-graders. These indicators will serve to create strategies to improve school readiness and school success. States include Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin.<sup>28</sup>

### Community strategies to improve school readiness

*North Carolina*

The North Carolina State Board of Education, Public Schools, and Department of Public Instruction commissioned a report on community strategies and assessments to improve school readiness—a valuable “tool kit” for communities and States implementing school readiness initiatives.<sup>29</sup>

While the above section outlines broad strategies, the CCCC also recommends simple solutions to be implemented regionally. For example, the National Goals panel recommends that Kindergarten teachers establish a relationship with each child and family prior to the first day of school through visits to the home and preschool, personal letters, and an open house before school begins. In contrast, a recent survey of Kindergarten teachers found that the most predominant transition strategies occurred after the beginning of school, usually as an impersonal letter or an open house in late September.<sup>30</sup>

Small improvements in transition plans increase students’ success in school, as demonstrated by the Sacramento Unified School District in California. In a low-income, primarily immigrant community, teachers at the Susan B. Anthony School partnered with a local community organization, interpreters, and nurses to visit each student at home, engage in conversation with the parents, and share the school’s objectives for student success. Two months later, 600 parents attended a school potluck, and the school has succeeded in partnering with parents to increase students’ achievement and decrease truancy. As a result of this program, California offers \$15 million in grants to districts to implement similar home visit programs.<sup>31</sup>

# Recommendations

Within each of the three themes explored above, the Child Care Coordinating Committee has specific recommendations:

## Goal 1: Bolster support to parents and other early educators

### Action

Increase reimbursement rate for subsidized child care to at least the 75th to 80th percentile of the market rate.

Increase subsidy eligibility to families with incomes up to 225 percent of the federal poverty level.

Reduce the family's co-payment for subsidized child care to no more than 10 percent of the family's income.

Exempt mothers of infants from birth to 12 months of age from TANF work requirements.

Provide funding and incentives to increase compensation for educators and caregivers

Expand the True Cost of Care Project beyond Seattle/ King County to develop more comprehensive data on the gap in funding

### Reason

The reimbursement rate (currently at the 58th percentile based on the 2000 rate survey) limits parents' options and provides inadequate funding to pay for educated caregivers with high quality environments.

Low-income working families need high quality child care to enable parents to work and to support children's learning.

As co-payments increase, use of licensed child care decreases, putting children's development and learning at risk.

Maternal stress inhibits a child's learning and healthy growth, and maternal-child bonding is critical to the child's ability to learn.

The average salary of early care and education teachers hovers at the poverty level, less than half what beginning Kindergarten teachers earn, which causes high turnover and low quality care.

Early education and out-of-school time programs do not accurately budget for salaries commensurate to the education required of teachers, educational materials, and nutritional meals. With an accurate budget, policy makers will have a better estimate of the funding gap.

*The average salary of early care and education teachers hovers at the poverty level.*





*Education and training, compensation initiatives, technical assistance, public health, food subsidies, licensing and accreditation all work together to boost the quality of early learning and out-of-home school time programs. These programs also support parents as a child's first educator.*

Research innovative funding to share the burden of the cost of early childhood education.

Ensure that existing community-based support systems are retained at current levels of funding

Currently, parents pay for about 80 percent of the total cost of early care and education. Government pays most of the remainder and employers pay a small proportion. With shared financing, quality and access would improve.

Education and training, compensation initiatives, technical assistance, public health, food subsidies, licensing and accreditation all work together to boost the quality of early learning and out-of-school time programs. These programs also support parents as a child's first educator.

## Goal 2: Build partnerships among educators and educational settings

### Action

Identify shared goals, resources, and objectives from the community based teams in Project Lift Off's "Getting School Ready," the Alignment Project, and other similar projects. Expand upon elements that succeeded in creating a common language, and replicate and customize these models in additional communities.

Create incentives for school districts to allocate funds for Primary education teachers to meet with early education teachers/providers and align learning objectives. Provide grant funds to create transition programs that include home visits, preschool visits, and portfolios or assessments of children.

### Reason

Lessons for replication can be drawn across the models currently in use by certain regions for Initiative-728 funds, Washington State Project STEPS, and the BOOST Learning Initiative, among others.

Effective strategies range from small-scale to large-scale. Children and families would benefit from small grant programs to create district transition plans.

### Goal 3: Align learning outcomes

#### Action

Review and replicate elements of the Maryland Model for School Readiness, especially the Work Sampling System™ which documents and supports children's skills, knowledge, and behavior across seven developmental areas.<sup>32</sup>

By documenting a child's skills, knowledge, and behavior across seven developmental areas, it builds upon the strengths of early education programs, linking them to future learning.

Disseminate a pocket guide for parents/teachers that outline how early learning and Kindergarten curriculum are aligned –similar to Common Understandings by Project Lift Off in King County.

Assess the feasibility of a universal Pre-K program through an expansion of Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), blending of funding streams, and creation of new revenue sources similar to other states (ie: tobacco tax in California).

#### Reason

This developmentally appropriate method builds upon the strengths of early education programs, linking them to future learning.

Alignment helps to build partnerships that lead to student success, by creating a common language and understanding of the issue of school readiness and school success.

Universal Pre-K offers the assurance that EVERY child has the opportunity to succeed in future education and provides a convenient platform to establish communication among early learning programs and K-12 schools.





## Conclusion

The bridge of learning from infancy to adulthood relies upon the ability of parents, teachers, and community members to address the needs of the whole child and link learning from a variety of sources and settings to achieve common goals. Effective bridges among learning environments links between early education, K-12 classrooms, and out-of-school time programs create strong partnerships of home, school, and community with a systematic approach to align learning outcomes. The State of Washington has the knowledge available to ensure that every child succeeds.



- 1 The Kauffman Early Education Exchange, Set for Success: Building a Strong Foundation for School Readiness Based on the Social-Emotional Development of Young Children, Executive Summary, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation; Kansas City, MO, 2002. See [http://www.emkf.org/pdf/eex\\_summary.pdf](http://www.emkf.org/pdf/eex_summary.pdf).
- 2 RCW 28A.150.210
- 3 For more information, see <http://www.mdk12.org/instruction/ensure/MMSR/MMSRFA1.html>
- 4 "Good Start, Grow Smart: The Bush Administration's Early Childhood Initiative," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/earlychildhood/toc.html>.
- 5 Thompson, E.B., The Washington State Child Care Experience Since 1996: Implications for Federal and State Policy, Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network; Tacoma, WA; January 2002.
- 6 Olson, Lynn, "Starting Early," Quality Counts 2002: Building Blocks for Success; Education Week; Vol. 21, number 17; January 10, 2002. <http://www.edweek.org/sreports/qc02/templates/article.cfm?slug=17intro.h21>
- 7 For more information, please see <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2002/09/11/BA99042.DTL> and <http://www.sen.ca.gov/masterplan/>.
- 8 RCW 28A.150.210
- 9 Halle, et al, School Readiness: Helping Communities Get Children Get Ready for Schools and Schools Ready for Children, Child Trends Research Brief, October 2001. <http://www.childtrends.org/PDF/schoolreadiness.pdf>
- 10 OSPI presentation to the Washington State Senate Education Committee, 1999.
- 11 National Center for Early Development and Learning, Transition to Kindergarten, Early Childhood Research & Policy Briefs, Vol. 2, Number 2, Winter 2002
- 12 Project Lift Off Opportunity Fund, "Potential School Readiness Systems Initiative." See [www.projectlift-off.org](http://www.projectlift-off.org).
- 13 The Kauffman Early Education Exchange, Set for Success: Building a Strong Foundation for School Readiness Based on the Social-Emotional Development of Young Children, Executive Summary, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation; Kansas City, MO, 2002. See [http://www.emkf.org/pdf/eex\\_summary.pdf](http://www.emkf.org/pdf/eex_summary.pdf).
- 14 Olson, Lynn, "Starting Early," Quality Counts 2002: Building Blocks for Success; Education Week; Vol. 21, number 17; January 10, 2002.
- 15 The Economic Opportunity Institute has preliminary data on the districts' use of funds from Initiative-728. For more information, see <http://www.EOOnline.org> or <http://www.info@educationvoters.org>.
- 16 For more information on Washington State Project STEPS, see <http://www.esd112.org/steps>. For the national model, curricula, and resources, see <http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/stepsweb>.
- 17 For more information, see the Project Lift Off website at [www.projectlift-off.org](http://www.projectlift-off.org).
- 18 For more information, contact School's Out Washington at [stemple@schoolsoutwashington.org](mailto:stemple@schoolsoutwashington.org).
- 19 For more information, contact School's Out Washington at [stemple@schoolsoutwashington.org](mailto:stemple@schoolsoutwashington.org).
- 20 For further information, contact the Puget Sound Educational Service District.
- 21 For more information, see <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/>.
- 22 For more information, see <http://www.mdk12.org/instruction/ensure/MMSR/MMSRFA1.html>.
- 23 For more information, contact NCCIP at <http://www.nccip.org>.
- 24 See <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyc/upk.html>.
- 25 For a complete listing of district programs, see [http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts/ch655\\_2000/655\\_2000\\_UPK\\_Table\\_16.xls](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts/ch655_2000/655_2000_UPK_Table_16.xls).
- 26 See <http://www.ode.state.oh.us>.
- 27 For more information, please see <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2002/09/11/BA99042.DTL> and <http://www.sen.ca.gov/masterplan/>
- 28 For further information, see <http://www.rikidscount.org/rikc/>.
- 29 SERVE, School Readiness in North Carolina: Strategies for Defining, Measuring, and Promoting Success FOR ALL CHILDREN," Report of the Ready for School Goal Team, June 2000. <http://www.serve.org/publications/NCFull%20Report.pdf>.
- 30 National Center for Early Development and Learning, Transition to Kindergarten, Early Childhood Research & Policy Briefs, Vol. 2, Number 2, Winter 2002.
- 31 For information, see <http://www.glef.org/>.
- 32 For more information, see <http://www.mdk12.org/instruction/ensure/MMSR/MMSRFA1.html>







Washington State Child Care Coordinating Committee